

**CONGRESSMAN SHERWOOD BOEHLERT (R-NY)**  
**OPENING STATEMENT FOR AUGUSTINE REPORT HEARING**  
**October 20, 2005**

It's a pleasure to welcome everyone here this morning for our hearing on the new and vitally important National Academy report "Rising Above the Gathering Storm." This report is already getting an unusual amount of media coverage – a tribute, in part, to the reputations and work of our witnesses today – and that is helping to jump-start (and in other quarters, to intensify) a national discussion on research and education and the nation's future.

The overarching message of the report is simple and clear, and it's one the Congress had better heed. And the message is this: complacency will kill us. If the United States rests on its withering laurels in this competitive world, we will witness the slow erosion of our pre-eminence, our security and our standard of living. It's a sobering message.

It's also a message that this Committee has been trying to send for many years, now joined by Chairman Wolf and some of our other friends on Appropriations. Indeed, this Committee has pressed – sometimes successfully, sometimes not – for many of the specific proposals in the Academy report.

We have authorized increased spending on basic research, including funding for research equipment and for more daring and cross-disciplinary research; and we have created programs like the Noyce Scholarships to try to attract more top students into teaching, and like Tech Talent to get more students who express interest in science, math and engineering to complete majors in those fields.

We have pushed for greater funding for the education directorate at the National Science Foundation (NSF) and for the basic and applied research programs at the Department of Energy.

But we clearly haven't done nearly enough. Science programs still have to scrounge around for every additional cent; young scientists still have to beg for funds; our education system is still producing too many students who cannot compete with their counterparts around the world; and the federal government is still ignoring our fundamental energy problems while wasting money pandering to special interests.

So I urge our witnesses today – who are among the most prominent and respected leaders in this nation – to redouble your efforts to get the word out about this report. We need a lot more missionary work, especially in this era of fiscal constraint. While Congress turns its attention to fixing the immediate problems caused by the literal storms that have hit our coasts, we can't skimp on the funds needed to address the “gathering storm” described so starkly in your report.

There's an exchange in a Hemingway novel in which one character asks another how he went bankrupt. He answers, “Two ways. First gradually and then suddenly.” As a nation, we're gradually going bankrupt now in the ways described in the Academy report. If we don't act, we're going to wake up one day and find ourselves “suddenly” unable to compete.

I look forward to getting further guidance this morning on exactly what we should do to compete, and I hope we have a spirited discussion about the details of your recommendations. But as we argue about the specifics, I hope we can all come away with an even greater commitment to address the problems this report lays before us.